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22% SCHOOL BUILDINGS IN INDIA OLD OR DILAPIDATED

Many of India's schools lack basic amenities, finds an audit by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights

TOILETS WITHOUT RUNNING WATER

The report, based on a two-year-long survey of 26,071 schools across 12 states in north, west, east and north-eastern India, noted that 24 per cent schools lack water supply in toilets, meaning students have to carry water from outside, posing a safety risk. Also, more than half of the schools (51%) don't have special toilets catering to the differently-abled

MAJOR SAFETY LAPSES

- There's no zebra crossing outside 99% of the schools surveyed
- Another worrying finding is that about 22% of them have high-voltage wires/transformers within or adjacent to their premises
- There were some positive findings as well. For instance, most schools now have separate toilets for boys and girls

54%

SCHOOLS NOT PROVIDING MID-DAY MEALS AS PER THE STIPULATED MENU

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KARIMUR • VILUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Dissent cannot be shut down, says Apex Court

SC allows Rajasthan High Court to rule on the challenge to disqualification notices by Congress rebel MLAs

KANU SARDA @New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Thursday observed that the voice of dissent cannot be suppressed, else democracy will shut down, while refusing to restrain the Rajasthan High Court from delivering its verdict on a petition by rebel Congress MLAs challenging the disqualification proceedings initiated against them by state Assembly Speaker C P Joshi.

A three-judge bench comprising Justices Arun Mishra, B R Gavai and Krishna Murari was hearing the Speaker's petition's questioning the July 21 Rajasthan High Court order directing him to extend the time given to the rebel lawmakers to reply to the disqualification notices. Interestingly, the same bench will hear a 2009 contempt petition against senior advocate Prashant Bhushan on Friday.

Representing Joshi, senior advocate Kapil Sibal said the HC cannot give such a direction in view of the 1992 Constitution Bench judgment that courts cannot interdict the Speaker from proceeding before a final decision is taken.

"The question is can voices of dissent be shut down like this? Can a person elected by the people not express his dissent? Voice of dissent cannot be suppressed. Then democracy will shut," remarked Justice Mishra, adding that the court will hear the matter at length on Monday.

During the hearing, Sibal said: "Proceedings under the 10th Schedule are proceedings before the Legislature and cannot be interfered with... There are allegations against the MLAs. They have given statements to the media. Why are they not replying to the disqualification notices?" To the bench's poser on whether a whip can be issued outside the House, Sibal said it was not a whip but a notice issued by the chief whip for a Congress Legislature Party meeting. P9

ASSEMBLY SESSION SOON

Confident that he has ample support, Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Thursday said an Assembly session will be called soon and his government will prove its majority | P9

KARNATAKA COVID-19 BATTLE

5,030

Karnataka registers the highest single-day spike so far

2,071 RECOVERIES IN THE DAY

97 DEATHS WITH ILLS FROM BENGALURU

1,616 Total deaths

29,310 Recoveries so far

Bengaluru, with 2,202 registers the most number of cases once again, followed by Raichur (258), Kalaburagi (229), Dakshina Kannada (218) and Belagavi (214)

In Chitradurga, more than 400 cops are in home quarantine leading to shortage of police personnel in the district

REPORTS: P4

BSY's 5 take on Cong over 'Kaurava' jibe

ANUSHA RAVI @ Bengaluru

ON a day the state witnessed over 5,000 new Covid-19 cases, politicians in the state were engaged in their own 'Kurukshetra' on Thursday, with volleys as to who were the Kauravas and who the Pandavas.

It all started with Congress State President D K Shivakumar, while reiterating allegations of misappropriation of funds against the B S Yediyurappa government in Covid-19 procurements, referred to the BJP leaders as "Kauravas of Kaliyuga".

Barely minutes later, an agitated Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa was all set to counter Congress' allegations. But he chose to let five of his ministers — almost as if in response to the Congress' jibe of 'Kauravas' with his 'Pandavas'— counter the opposition's claims by revealing actual funds spent so far by each department.

"We have come here to respond just as the Pandavas responded to Kauravas. We are here, the Pancha Pandavas," thundered Revenue Minister R Ashoka, who led the BJP charge. The ministers accused the Congress of politicising the pandemic.

The ministers — Deputy CM C N Ashwath Narayana, Ashoka, Basavaraj Bommai, Dr K Sudhakar and Shivaram Hebbar took turns to rubbish the Congress charge while giving out details of funds spent by their ministries towards tackling Covid-19. Home Minister Bommai even turned down the demand for a probe stating that an investigation into false allegations was not the solution. Officials have already presented all necessary documents to the Public Accounts Committee, he added.

At a joint press conference earlier, Leader of the Opposition Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar tore into the government accusing its ministers of misappropriating money in the garb of procurement. "The total money spent on Covid management is Rs 4,167 crore whereas state Health Minister B Sriramulu says only Rs 324 crore has been spent. Equipment and materials were purchased at double or triple the cost. At least Rs 2,000 crore has been pocketed by ministers and officials," Siddaramaiah had alleged. SEE: P3

TAKING IT TOO FAR

BBMP workers seal two flats in an apartment complex, belonging to a Covid-19 positive person and his neighbour, in Domlur on Thursday. The act invited scorn after a resident posted photos on social media. The BBMP top brass then scrambled to the spot and ensured that the sheets were removed | P2

Incentives linked to production on drawing board for 5 more sectors

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @New Delhi

IN a bid to boost local manufacturing and attract new investments to labour-intensive productive sectors to lift the coronavirus-stricken economy, the Centre is working on a plan to offer production-linked incentives for four or five sectors, Economic Affairs Secretary Tarun Bajaj said on Thursday.

This will be in addition to similar concessions already announced for certain sectors in the recent past.

Tarun Bajaj

Without naming which sectors will be given the incentives, Bajaj said "the industrial segments that will be chosen will be a mix of sunrise sectors, export-oriented sectors and those that are facing serious challenges due to the economic disruption".

He was speaking at a virtual conference organised by industry chamber FICCI.

Earlier this month, the government had announced production-linked incentives for large-scale electronic goods manufacturers to reduce dependence on imports from China. Incentives have also been announced for pharmaceutical companies for production of bulk drugs and on medical devices.

Bajaj added the government will expand the scope of the MSME credit support scheme to benefit more people who are facing liquidity crisis due to protracted lockdowns and restrictions due to Covid-19

Terming the economic growth in June and July "more promising than thought", he said the central government is expecting India to make a quick 'V' shaped economic recovery from the sharp fall in GDP growth caused by economic disruptions in the wake of the novel coronavirus pandemic.

"The 14 to 15 parameters we are tracking are showing promising results," Bajaj said.

However, the projections could go wrong if Covid-19 hits the country very hard, "which is highly unlikely", he added.

He also conceded that the government may not meet the Budget targets for 2020-21 due to the Covid-19 crisis but claimed the contraction in economic growth may not be as severe as being pointed out by some experts.

'NO PLAN TO PRINT MONEY AS OF NOW'

The Economic Affairs Secretary also said that monetisation of debt is not on the government's agenda at the moment, noting that there are some positive signs on the revenue collection front. Monetisation of debt means the central bank will print currency for the government to take care of any emergency spending and to bridge its fiscal deficit

"These policy changes are urgent and necessary to help boost the economy that has been severely hit by Covid-19. Industries too have to make up for the lost man-hours

Jagadish Shettar, Industries Minister

New industry policy aims to keep state in top league

ANUSHA RAVI @Bengaluru

THE Karnataka Cabinet on Thursday approved a new Industrial Policy which increases the cap on quarterly overtime for labourers, under the Factories Act, 1948, to 125 hours from the existing 75 hours. Women workers can also be deployed on night shifts. In a separate amendment to the Small Factories (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Services) Bill, 2014, the cabinet exempted MSMEs with up to 20 employees from compliance.

Focused on attracting investments of up to Rs 5 lakh crore and creating 20 lakh jobs over the next five years, the cabinet on Thursday approved its New Industrial Policy 2020-2025. Large and Medium Scale Industries Minister Jagadish Shettar said the policy is aimed at maintaining Karnataka's industrial growth rate at 10 per cent per annum.

The cabinet brought in numerous changes in the form of ordinances in the run-up to the new industrial policy. "The changes made to land or labour rules are nothing but liberalisation of existing laws," Shettar told *The New Indian Express*. CONTINUED ON: P7

EYE ON CHINA

MORE CHINESE MISSIONS IN THE US MAY BE SHUT DOWN

Says President Donald Trump hours after Washington ordered closure of Beijing's consulate in Houston to "protect intellectual property".

EXPRESS READ

Centre okays 'larger roles' for women in Army

The Ministry of Defence has issued an order for grant of permanent commission to women officers in the Army. Army spokesperson Col Aman Anand said this has paved the way for women officers to shoulder "larger roles" in the Army. | P9

Serum Institute starts work on Covid vaccine

The Pune-based Serum Institute of India, which has partnered with Oxford University and AstraZeneca for production of the Covishield vaccine, has begun early production for the Phase-3 clinical trials. The SSI has to conduct field trials before getting the final nod.

Pak has blocked all legal remedy to Jadhav: Govt

New Delhi: India on Thursday said Pakistan has once again blocked all legal remedies to Kulbhushan Jadhav. "The whole exercise of not providing unimpeded consular access exposes the farcical nature of Pakistan's approach," the Ministry of External Affairs said. | P9

U-turn after move to stop spamming

RICHA SHARMA @New Delhi

SPAMMING can be irritating irrespective of how good the cause may be. But if it's not done for unethical purposes, invoking a draconian anti-terror law to put the spammers out of business would be monstrous, as has happened with the Friday for Future India (FFI), the Indian chapter of a global climate movement by students led by Swedish activist Greta Thunberg.

Greta Thunberg

The activists were booked under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) for sending thousands of emails to Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar criticising a draft Environment Impact Assessment 2020 notification.

On July 8, the Delhi Police Special Cell sent a notice to Endurance Domains Technology LLP, an internet service provider hosting FFI's domain, asking it to block the group's website as their "unlawful activities may disturb peace, sovereignty of India".

The site was taken down two days later. But after the action snowballed into a big controversy, the police on Thursday claimed they have since remedied the error by withdrawing UAPA charges and serving a new notice under the IT Act.

The earlier notice said: "The website depicts objectionable contents and unlawful activities or terrorist acts, which are dangerous for the peace, tranquillity and sovereignty of India. The publication and transmission of such objectionable contents is a cognizable and punishable criminal offence under Section 18 of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act."

"Govt muzzles young environmental voices," the FFI tweeted. "We don't have any hatred or work against any particular leaders or the government. We are just concerned for our deteriorating environment," said 8-year-old activist Licypriya Kangujam.

Violence against docs: IMA writes to PM, CM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

THE Indian Medical Association, New Delhi, and its Karnataka branch, as well as the Karnataka Association of Resident Doctors (KARD) have condemned Wednesday's violence at the Civil Hospital in Belagavi where an ambulance was torched after a Covid-19 patient died. They have also denounced the incident at KC General Hospital in Bengaluru where doctors were attacked by attendants of a patient.

In a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa, IMA-Karnataka said, "The recent spurt of attacks on doctors and hospitals is alarming. Though stringent ordinance on Epidemic Diseases Act was promulgated by your esteemed government, none of the above cases of violence on doctors, are being recorded in FIRs." P6

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